

Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society



February 14, 2017

Senate Agriculture Committee
Illinois General Assembly
Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

RE: **OPPOSE** Senate Bill 0641 – Animal Control-Feral Cats

Dear Chairperson Harris, Vice-Chairperson Bennett, and Committee Members:

The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society is a professional organization of over 100 wildlife professionals dedicated to excellence in wildlife conservation through science and education. We represent biologists, managers, educators, technicians, and others who actively work to study, manage and conserve wildlife and their habitats in Illinois.

We urge you to oppose Senate Bill 0641, introduced by Senator Linda Holmes, which facilitates trap/neuter/return (TNR) programs for feral cats. Of significant concern to members of The Wildlife Society are the well-studied and documented risks that feral cats pose to native wildlife. As feral cats and colonies represent a serious environmental issue, we encourage and support actions to humanely eliminate the problem of free-ranging and feral cats. However, TNR programs are ineffective at mitigating damage to wildlife and a majority of Illinois homeowners surveyed in 2004 opposed TNR programs as a feral cat management tool.

Feral cats are a non-native, invasive species that kill 1.3-4.0 billion birds and 6.3-22.3 billion mammals each year in the United States. Most feral cats suffer premature mortality from disease, starvation, or trauma. Senate Bill 0641 legitimizes TNR by allowing the use of dog and cat registration and microchip fees to support the release of feral cats back into the environment. Thus, under this bill and the related legislation, responsible pet owners will be required to subsidize TNR programs and the release of feral cats to the detriment of native wildlife.

In addition to the Illinois Chapter, The Wildlife Society—in its entirety—represents over 9,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers internationally. The Society has adopted an Issue Statement of feral and free-ranging cats, which is attached for your reference.

Thank you for opposing Senate Bill 0641.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Heath Hagy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Heath Hagy
President, Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society

copy: Keith Norris, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships, The Wildlife Society